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ORIGINAL  
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Medical Libraries in Approved Hospitals for Negroes\*

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IN making the rounds of Negro hospitals approved for internship and for residencies, one is immediately impressed with the general layout, the equipment and the efficient lights to be found in the operating rooms. No one should find fault with well equipped operating rooms, but at the same time one becomes keenly aware of the need of placing the same emphasis upon the proper equipment of the medical library of the hospital as upon the equipment of the operating room. After all, the professional mental equipment of the surgeon is of far more importance than the type of operating table, the make of the gas machine or the kind of lights which dangle from the ceiling. The light within the surgeon, the internist, the interne and the nurse illumines far more dark places than does the beautiful and costly "universal" one which aids the vision but does little to enlarge the understanding.

The patient in the hospital presents a problem to be solved. The solution in each case requires study. Every patient is an individual presenting a problem which requires a different solution. This the medical student is taught during his undergraduate career. He

understands that to render the best service to the patient, it is necessary to keep up with the ever increasing forward march of the science of medicine and that to do so requires the constant use of a medical library in which are to be found the standard texts, reference books and the scientific periodical literature dealing with all phases of medicine. The medical student is taught the importance of using the medical library not only for the sake of increasing his knowledge, of keeping alive his enthusiasm for the work, but also for the purpose of stimulating his scientific curiosity, of continually raising questions in his mind. The medical student learns to use the medical library by using it. Before long he begins to realize that he cannot get along without it. Parenthetically, I offer the observation that habitual use of the medical library by medical students has had a wonderfully stimulating effect upon some members of the faculty who, heretofore, were not quite sure where to find the library, or how to use it effectively when it was finally located.

When students graduate from medical school and enter upon their internships, and later upon their residencies, they have justifiable reason to find a medical library in the hospital.

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They have been accustomed to the use of such a library; they need it for the proper conduct of their work, for their own development. They know that an approved hospital is required to provide an adequate working medical library.

Every hospital, for the benefit of its visiting staff, has need of an adequate medical library. Every hospital, approved for the training of internes and residents, is obligated to provide an adequate medical library.

What is the present condition of medical libraries in approved hospitals for Negroes? I raise this question not to answer it but to arouse interest in it; to stimulate a self evaluation of our hospitals upon the matter and to make a plea for improvement in interest of better care of the patient, of improvement in the physicians on the visiting staff and of better education of the interne and the resident.

The Council on Medical Education and Hospitals of the American Medical Association, which approves hospitals for the training of internes and residencies in the specialties, has set up definite requirements for these hospitals. These requirements are published each year in the Hospital Number of the Journal of the American Medical Association and may be obtained in pamphlet form. It is evident that in many cases these requirements are considered to be mere ideals to be aimed at. It is assumed that the hospitals are in an aiming mood.

The "Essentials in a Hospital Approved for Training Internes" contains the following provision with reference to the medical library:

"There must be a working medical library, in charge of a librarian, which should contain a useful selection of late editions of standard text and reference books and current files of not less than ten of the better medical journals. The library should be inside the hospital building and be located where it is readily accessible to the internes and staff members. Collections of choice reference books in pathology and clinical diagnosis and in the roentgen-ray work should be found respectively in the pathologic and roentgenologic departments."

The "Essentials in a Hospital Approved for Residencies in Specialties" contains the following requirement:

"The hospital shall maintain, or provide ready access to, an adequate medical library containing modern texts and current journals covering the fields in which residencies are offered."

The need of inquiring into the adequacy of medical libraries has become evident from personal observations made in Negro hospitals, from interviews with internes and residents and from confidential information obtained from questionnaires returned by internes who have served in these hospitals. The need of further inquiry is suggested by the information received from internes who have served in these hospitals within the past three years.

For the past three years it has been the practice of the college of Medicine of Howard University to request the hospitals to furnish a rating of the internes who graduated from this school. Likewise, we have been asking the internes to furnish a confidential rating of the hospital. A questionnaire is sent to each intern with the request that he answer each of the fourteen questions and return the questionnaire to the Office of the Dean. Question No. 9 on this questionnaire is, "Is there an adequate medical library available in or near the hospital?" (Exhibits I and II are copies of the questionnaires to the hospital and to the interne, respectively). There is room on the reverse side for extended remarks. Sometimes these remarks extend over two or more additional pages. Generally, the nature and tone of these replies to the question referring to the medical library tend to confirm the observation that much needs to be done in the development of libraries in these hospitals. (See page 53.)

The following are some typical quotations from the reports of internes in answer to Question No. 9, "Is there an adequate medical library available in or near the hospital?"

For obvious reasons the name of the hospital is not given here. Each hospital is designated

by a Roman numeral, the interne by an arabic numeral.

#### *Hospital I*

1935. 1. "Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ has a very good library and the hospital subscribes to a few of the better journals."

#### *Hospital II*

1936. 1. "Best journals all depts. available."

#### *Hospital III*

1936. 1. "Yes."  
1936. 2. "Yes."  
1937. 3. "Yes."

#### *Hospital IV*

1935. 1. "Yes, near the hospital."  
1935. 2. "No. The \_\_\_\_\_ but not available as far as time is concerned."  
1936. 3. "The most serious defects in an internship here are lack of library facilities within the hospital proper and the volume of work required of the internes. There is under way a plan to build up the hospital library; and the employment of laboratory technicians and resident anaesthetists has relieved the internes of part of their arduous labors."

#### *Hospital V*

1935. 1. "Medical books and literature are available nearby but not under convenient nor pleasing circumstances."  
2. "The medical library of the \_\_\_\_\_ County Medical Society is available to the Internes of the Hospital, which is located in the white Hospital."

#### *Hospital VI*

1936. 1. "Yes. The internes of \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital may borrow books from the \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital Medical Library. \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital has a small library. The books, however, are antiquated."

#### *Hospital VII*

1936. 1. "The hospital has a library, but inadequate. There is no other available near by."  
1937. 2. "There is no adequate library available or near the hospital, the nearest being the County Medical Library which requires much red tape to use."

#### *Hospital VIII*

1936. 1. "No. No encouragement—inadequate literature."

#### *Hospital IX*

1935. 1. "Yes. \_\_\_\_\_ the interne is so very busy that he scarcely has time to do any reading in connection with his case; in fact, he is not encouraged to do so."

#### *Hospital X*

1935. 1. "No"; 2. "No"; 3. "No"; 4. "No"; 5. "No library at \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital."  
6. "Yes."  
7. "No library in the Hospital. Libraries of \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Schools are available."  
8. "\_\_\_\_\_ Library; little time afforded. The interne who does his routine work is so tired at the end of a day, he must use his off time for rest rather than study."  
1937. 9. "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Library is available, but we never have time to go there. The large volume of work inhibits a thorough study of the case. Often the interne is so tired that a hurried glance is the best that he may have before falling asleep. Occasionally, he does not get a chance to really read on a case thoroughly. I have found little encouragement to be given for reading."  
10. "There is a medical library at \_\_\_\_\_ but no one ever goes there. Probably this is due to the desire of the men to avoid any unpleasantness. No conflict has ever risen to my knowledge, but one must remember the general role of the Negro here. Then too, this thought is strengthened by the fact that the Colored are not permitted to attend the White Medical Conventions here."  
11. "There is thus far no library available."

The answers given here are typical of those received and of information secured from internes in personal interview both during and after their hospital services. The answers to this inquiry raise four important questions, namely, (1) Adequacy of the medical library; (2) Availability of the medical library; (3) Time free for use of library; (4) Encouragement in use of library.

Whether or not the hospital medical library is adequate can best be decided by those on the staff who have become accustomed to using a medical school library, the library of a teaching hospital or a library of an active city or

county medical society. Certainly no number of antiquated or obsolete text-books or reference books or of assorted, unbound, unclassified periodicals can be called an adequate working medical library. For detailed consideration on this point, attention is called to "Hospital Medical Library Suggestions", prepared by the Council on Medical Education and Hospitals, appearing in the Hospital Number of the Journal of the American Medical Association, March 27, pp. 1052-1059. This article furnishes an excellent list of books and periodicals from which to make a choice. There is also furnished a list of publishers. The budget of every hospital should include a liberal allowance for books, scientific periodicals and for binding. This should be insisted upon each year. All current periodicals should be bound at the end of the year for sake of preservation, avoidance of loss and ready and convenient use.

When is a medical library available? For practical hospital purposes, a medical library more than two blocks away from the hospital is not available. A medical school library more than two blocks away from the hospital is too far away. Many members of the visiting staff are not likely to go even that far. They are likely to ask the interne to look it up some time. The interne will probably refer to his notes or his senile text-book and let it go at that. Certainly a medical library walled-off by "customs," "traditions," or "racial restrictions" of any sort is not available, however kindly disposed certain broad-minded officials may be on the matter. They cannot be around all the time to ward off insults offered by micro-personalities. The only guarantee that an adequate working medical library will be available is to provide a suitable place for it in the hospital and to appropriate the money to keep it up and to expand it. Those jurisdictions which are yet socially so immature as to require separation of the professional servants of mankind in their ministrations unto the suffering ought to be fair enough to pay for their privilege of exclusiveness by providing equal facilities in these separate hospitals, including adequate

medical libraries for both. Such a library is no less a necessity for the one hospital than for the other. Hospital authorities cannot make up for the need of a medical library by referring the members of their staff to a library which for them does not exist.

Any hospital medical library well placed and well supplied with literature will produce ample returns in improved service. It is important that the interne should have time to use the library, that he should be encouraged to do so, and, in fact, required to use it. Now that the internes have become accustomed to the use of a medical library during their career as undergraduate medical students, even though they may at times complain of the heavy hospital routine, will enter more enthusiastically into their work if they have a good working library at hand.

In the nature of case the interne must do a great deal of real work that might well be classified as drab, unenlightening routine; yet it should be kept in mind that he is a fifth year student in medicine. The resident is also a student. The hospital cannot escape its responsibility for teaching these men. A hospital which does not or cannot do its part in furnishing continued instruction to its internes and residents should revise its policy and hire doctors merely to work in the hospital on a real salary basis. The interne and the resident in the hospital should work, yes; but they should also be taught and should have the opportunity to learn for themselves. They should receive inspiration and have their enthusiasm sustained by reading and study in order that they may bring the latest and best of scientific knowledge and understanding to bear upon the solution of clinical problems. What is of even greater importance for a select few of them is that they should be encouraged to raise questions which at present cannot be answered. No investment of hospital funds will produce a bigger or better income than that made in the development and maintenance of an adequate medical library. For an approved hospital the provision of such a library is an obligation.

HOWARD UNIVERSITY  
Washington, D. C.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

School of Medicine  
Office of Dean

Dear Doctor :

I am writing to request you to inform me whether or not the work of..... has been satisfactory during the entire year of his internship. It will be of great help to us in the future if you will enter below a grade for him according to the following plan: A—Excellent; B—Good; C—Fair (Average); D—Passing; E—Condition (Poor); F—Failure (Unsatisfactory). Please fill in the appropriate spaces below.

With many thanks, I am

Sincerely yours

NUMA P. G. ADAMS,  
Dean

RATING OF INTERNE

Name of Interne: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Observance of rules of hospital—
2. Conscientiousness—
3. Faithfulness—
4. Attitude towards patients—
5. Attitude towards Staff and Superintendent—
6. Promptness—
7. Neatness—
8. History taking and keeping of records—
9. Clinical work—
  - a. Medicine—
  - b. Surgery—
  - c. Obstetrics - Gynecology—
  - d. Pediatrics—
  - e. Laboratory (including X-Ray)—
  - f. Specialties—

General Rating—

Remarks :

\_\_\_\_\_, Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_, Hospital

HOWARD UNIVERSITY  
Washington, D. C.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

School of Medicine  
Office of Dean

Dear Doctor :

It is our policy to request all internes to please give their frank, confidential opinion of the Hospital in which they are serving an internship. I shall appreciate it if you will please answer the following questions and return them to this office at your earliest convenience.

With many thanks, I am

Sincerely yours

NUMA P. G. ADAMS,  
Dean

Report of \_\_\_\_\_

Interne at \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you well housed and well fed?
2. Have you received good clinical services?  
Please report by departments.
3. Is the Staff of high grade?  
Please report by departments.
4. Does the Staff take time to teach you?
5. Do you attend the clinical meetings of the Staff?  
Are you required to do so?
6. Is there a Clinical-Pathological Conference?
7. Are there special clinics, clinical meetings or clinical lectures for internes?
8. Are you given time, encouragement, and opportunity for reading in connection with study of your patients?
9. Is there an adequate medical library available in or near the hospital?
10. Are you required to work up your cases thoroughly?
11. Do you have a laboratory service? How long?
12. Are you required to do the laboratory work on your own cases?
13. Have you had a complete physical examination since you began your internship?
14. Remarks: (State your general opinion of the hospital and also any confidential information you may wish to give. Please use reverse side of this sheet.)